A Perſwaſive TO ALL DISSENTERS TO Unity in Religion,

As it is Eſtabliſh'd in the Church of *England*.

THe wiſeſt of Kings hath told us, *That there is a time, and a ſeaſon for all things; a time to keep ſilence, and a time to ſpeak*; and certainly now, if ever, the laſt time is not only convenient, but abſolutely neceſſary: And ſhould man hold his Peace and neglect this Duty, even the Stone ſhould cry out of the Wall, and the Beam of the Timber ſhall anſwer it. I direct this my Diſcourſe and Perſwaſive to Unity in Religion to all in general; But more particularly to thoſe, who are *Diſſenters* from the Church of *England*, and who ſeem to make a breach in the Conformity, and happy Unity of the Church; and over-nice Scruples, cauſe a *Schiſm* and rent in its ſeamleſs Garment. 'Tis to You that I now ſpeak; as a Friend, as a Brother, for ſo we ought to be one to another, and not as Wolves and Dogs, ſnarling and ſnapping one at the other, but with gentleneſs and freedom admoniſh one another; with all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in Love: 'Tis the command of Chriſt, who is Love it ſelf, *That we Love one another*; by It we are known to be his true Diſciples, and followers of him. And there can be no greater ſign of his Love, than friendly to admoniſh one another of Errors, and ſtraying from the Truth; and to aſſiſt the weak, to raiſe up thoſe that fall; to call to Unity and Concord, and to ſtir up to Peace and Amity: *That we may be all of one mind, having compaſſion one of another, loving as Brethren, being pitiful, being courteous; not rendring evil for evil, and railing for railing*, 1 Pet. 3. 8, 9.

1682.

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Since Separation and Diviſion among Brethren proceeds from the cunning and malice of Satan, why ſhould it continue any longer in our *Iſrael?* why ſhould not every man put to his helping hand, to build up the walls of Unity? Are we not Brethren? Have we not one Father, God? One Head, Jeſus Chriſt? Is he not our common Shepherd? Have we not one Faith, Salvation by Chriſt? Do we not believe him come in the Fleſh? Do not we confeſs his Name? Are we not all Chriſtians? And indeed are we not alſo of one Mother the Church? Why then this Separation? This Diviſion? This drawing ſeveral ways? Why cannot, or why do not you Unite as you ought to do? And that this may be effected, and that our happy Unity may be laſting and perpetual.

You muſt leave off to interpret the whole ſcope of Scripture, as if framed to maintain your own form of Government, preſenting your followers with falſe Gloſſes, whereby they read only as you would have them, and pervert Scripture to maintain the falſe *Ideas* of ſickly Imaginations; and thus every Sect makes the Scripture to ſpeak in favour of their way and falſe Opinions, to maintain their *Schiſm* and Separation; calling all *Samaria* and *Babylon* that are not of themſelves, and their own Congregations, *Sion* and *Jeruſalem*. You muſt alſo leave off thoſe Names of Separation and diſtinguiſhment, calling your ſelves the *Godly*, the *Brethren*, the *Good People*, *Gods Children*, the *Sanctified*; Others the *Ungodly*, *Reprobates*, *Wordlings*, *Time ſervers*, *Men pleaſers*, *Moraliſts*, and *Latitudinarians*, *Arminians*, and the like. You muſt alſo ceaſe to cry out againſt Magiſtrates and Rulers, Kings and Governours, as *Severe*, *Cruel* and *Tyrannical* upon the leaſt reſtraint of your Liberties; as if you were thereby become Martyrs for the Cauſe of Chriſt: Alſo you muſt not ſpeak contemptibly of Biſhops, (as ſome too frequently do,) giving them ſcurrillous Names, as *Uſurpers*, *Spiritual Tyrants*, *Lordly Biſhops*, &c. And calling the Miniſters of the Goſpel in contempt *Prieſts*, nay *Baal's Prieſts*, *Time-ſervers*, *State Divines*, *Dumb Dogs*, *Vain Bablers*, with ſuch like Language; Thoſe whom the Scriptures Dignifie and Honour with the Titles of *Chriſts Embaſſadors*, *Gods Stewards*, and the like.

Open then your Eyes at laſt, and look not ſo a ſquint on this Form of Government; and more particularly as it is here Eſtabliſh'd in the *Church of England*, which certainly is the moſt like, and comes neareſt to the Primitive Inſtitution of the Apoſtles, and the next Ages of any Church in the World, both for the Purity of its Doctrine, and the Order of its Government; its Ceremonies being both few and Decent, and its Power regulated by Juſt Laws.

And

And as one says, *The Church of* England *is a Body of so firm a Constitution, and so excellently Temper'd, and so well Shap'd, and of so clear a strength and vigour in all its Limbs, that no outward force is able to injure it; nothing but some inward Corruption and decay in the Vital parts that can possibly bring it to the ground.* Vind. of the Conforming Clergy. p. 50.

Indeed some had trip'd up its Heels and lay'd it all along, but it was but a Foil, you see how soon it arose again; and in that little Interspace or *Inter-regnum*, as I may term it, what horrid Confusions were amongst us? Methinks this little Tryal might convince you of the weakness and Imbecility of the one, and the Firmness and excellent Temper of the other Government; by which this Land has so long flourished, and which is so fitted not only to Monarchy, making that Maxime good, as we by experience saw, *No Bishop, No King*; and among the rest the Learned Mr. *Hooker* in his *Pref. Sect.* 1. has these words, which he sets down as his full perswasion, *Surely the present Form of Church Government, which the Laws of this Land have Established, is such as no Law of God, nor Reason of Man hath hitherto been alledged of force sufficient to prove they do ill, who to the uttermost of their power withstand the alteration thereof. And contrarywise, the other, which instead of It, we are requir'd to accept, is only by Error and Misconceit, named the Ordinance of Jesus Christ, no one proof as yet brought forth whereby it may clearly appear to be in very deed.* And those two Assertions he hath so fully and unanswerably maintained in his excellent Book of the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, that methinks you should lay your Finger on your Mouths, and no longer speak against this Form of Church Government, nor remain at this distance, and in this state of Separation, till you have found out better Arguments for to justify your so doing, than those you have yet made known to the World.

Therefore, as the *Form of Divine Service, contain'd in the Book of Common Prayer*, which is now used in the Church of *England*, conduceth so much to the Edifying those that use it, and it agrees exactly with the Rules of the Apostles, and is performed in *English*, the Vulgar and common Language of the Nation, which every one understands: But in the Church of *Rome*, the common People are made uncapable of being Edify'd by the Prayers of the Church, in that they are all made in *Latine*, a Language which they do not all understand. So that when they meet to Worship God, there are seldom any in the Congregation that knows what is said there, except

the Prieſt that read it: But Bleſſed be God for it, it is not ſo with Us; for Ours is truly *Common Prayer*, for it is written and read in that Language which is common to all the Congregations in the Kingdom; So that no man that frequents our Publick Congregations, where the *Common Prayer* is uſed, can ever plead Ignorance of any one Duty whatſoever: For if it be not his own fault, he may there be inſtructed in every thing which he that made him, requires of him.

And ſeeing it hath pleaſed the moſt high God to compriſe his whole Will, (and by conſequence our Duty,) in the *Ten Commandments*; hence we read them conſtantly every *Sunday* and *Holy day* throughout the whole year; by which means every one that doth not wilfully ſhut his Eyes may clearly ſee, and fully underſtand his whole Duty both to God and Man; eſpecially, conſidering, that in the *Prayers* themſelves alſo there is frequent mention made of all thoſe Vices, which ought to be avoided, and all thoſe good works which ought to be performed by us: So that we can never come to Church, but we are ſtill put in mind, both of what we ought, and what we ought not not to do that we may be ſaved. Whereas if all and every perſon in the Congregation, would always be upon their Knees, while they put up their Petitions to the moſt high God, what a mighty advantage would this be, not only to every one in particular, but to the whole Congregation in general? For as every one would by this means keep his heart more ſtedfaſt in the true fear and dread of God, and likewiſe more certainly obtain the good things he Prays for; and by this means we ſhould excite and enflame each others Devotions, confirm and ſtrengthen one anothers Faith, and convince both our ſelves and all that ſee us, that Religion is a ſerious thing; and that we believe it to be ſo, by our ſerving God with ſo much Reverence and Godly fear, as this humble Poſture repreſenteth; for it is lamentable to think what abſurd things are done in the time of *Divine Service*; for I have ſeen ſome People ſitting in the time of *Common Prayer*, if we did but conſider we are in that Holy place, where Gods Majeſty is repreſented, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall judge us all at the laſt day; and therefore as you tender the Love of God, the Credit of Religion, or the Salvation of your own Souls, I beſeech you all in the Name of him that made you, that whenſoever you come hither to Pray unto Him, you do it in that Awful, Lowly, and Solemn manner, which our Church commandeth, and as becomes Creatures, when you ſpeak to your Great and Almighty Creator; that ſo you

may give true Worship and Honour unto Him, and also receive that Benefit and Edification of your selves, which he hath Promised, and you expect from *Publick Prayers*: This being certainly the most edifying Posture that you can possibly use upon such occasions.

Therefore great Blessings do we lose by neglecting to come to the Publick Prayers of the Church on the Week days, when we have so great opportunity, and our Churches so near us, and Prayers Morning and Evening in a great many places; and yet how many do neglect coming, and what a poor Congregation do we see in many great Parishes? Is not this a shame to Christian Religion: We find time for every thing else, and shall we not find time for this great Concern of our Souls; for with what Conscience can we expect a Blessing from our Heavenly Father, without asking it? And what an ungrateful thing it is to receive Blessings at Gods hands daily; and not as daily to acknowledge and give him Thanks for it in publick every day, as well as private? For by the publick we let the World see we are not ashamed of our Religion.

For my Charity prompts me to believe, that all the zeal that some express against the *Common Prayer*, and all that indifferency that is in others for it, proceeds from their Ignorance of what it is, or at least from their want of an Experimental knowledge of it. For let any man that seriously minds the Worship of God, and the Salvation of his Soul before all things else, let such a one, I say, set himself in good earnest to use the *Common Prayer* as he ought to do for some considerable time, and I do not doubt (but that by the Blessing of God,) he will find that benefit and edification by it, that his own experience shall convince him of all that I have now said, more than all the Arguments that I have, or any man in the World can ever produce to him.

Lay aside now your Passions I beseech you, put off your former Conversation, and be renewed in the Spirit of your mind: Speak every man Truth with his Neighbour, for we are Members one of another, Christ is our Head: There is but one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all. O do but consider the Beauty of Unity, let it allure you, let it break your stifness, let it move you to run into the open Arms of your Mother, and to be knit in the Bands of Amity with your Brethren. Consider how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity. And *Psal.* 133.

How Happy and Bleſſed then would the Nation be! The Nations round about us would Tremble, and our Adverſaries would be Confounded. O that there were a full Aſſent and Conſent among you both in Spirituals as well as Temporals! It is not enough that you Live together, that you Trade together, that you Converſe one with another; but to compleat your Happineſs, you muſt *Pray* together, and Worſhip together, that compleats the Friendſhip. We have been too long aſſunder, why ſhould there be any difference between *Benjamin* and *Judah*? Let us meet, I ſay, at laſt as Brethren; come with willing Hearts and Minds. The *Goliah* of Oppoſition may be eaſily ſlain; one ſingle Stone will ſink that *Philiſtine*. Let ſome among you ſet an Example, others will follow. Conſider the Peace of *Iſrael* more than your own Intereſt, and think how you will ſtrengthen the Hands of your Brethren by this ſo much deſired Unity and Happy Conformity. Let at laſt the great Mercy that is ſhown you, be a motive to bring you to this deſired and Happy Unity. Let Love draw you to reſt no longer; meet with Kindneſs and Submiſſion.

The Benevolence and Tender-heartedneſs of ſo Gracious a Prince towards you. How then can you Anſwer your contempt of the Laws and Commands, not only of a Chriſtian Prince, but of our own Church too: One that Commands nothing but Lawful things; it is not enough that you think otherwiſe of them, and that you pretend Scruples of Conſcience, there is no ſuch exception in the Rule laid down by the the Apoſtle. *Let every Soul be ſubject to the Higher Powers: Submit to every Ordinance of Man*, &c. *Rebellion is as the ſin of Witchcraft, and Stubborneſs is as Iniquity and Idolatry.* Let us conſider that *Cæſar* is our King, *Cæſar* is the Lords Anointed; *Cæſar* is our Nurſing Father; *Cæſar* is the Breath of our Noſtrils; *Cæſar* is the Son of ſuch a *Cæſar* who was a Martyr, who laid down his Life to preſerve us from Slavery. Our *Cæſar* hath been Miraculouſly Preſerv'd, and Miraculouſly Reſtor'd; nothing can be too Much, nothing can be too Dear for ſuch a *Cæſar*.

Certainly Obedience to ſuch a Prince, and to his Lawful Commands, would be more acceptable than all your long Prayers and frequent Preaching which is become your Idol, and which you ſet up in the room of the Croſſes you have pull'd down. Speak out, and tell us whether an Act for *Uniformity* and *Conformity* made by the three States of the Land, be a Legal Act or no; If it be, why do you not Obey? Why do you trouble the Waters with your needleſs

less Scruples of little weight and value, and about Trifles only, as you call them? Is not the Word truly dispensed in our Publick Churches? Are not the *Sacraments* rightly Administred? Are not our *Prayers* free from Scandal and Irreverence? Are not our Doctrines clear of Errour and Falsity? Why then do you deny to Hear, Receive and Communicate together? But in spite (as I may say) both of the Commands of God and Man, separate your selves, and run into Disobedience? I verily believe those of the Church of *England* would never run into that contempt of the King and his Laws; I am perswaded that for Conscience sake they would submit, should the King and Parliament by their Authority take away those Ceremonies about which you contend; they have learn'd better than to Rebel, and the Doctrine of our Church hath endued us with sounder and better Principles.

O that I could but make you sensible of the Blessing of this Unity; How much Glory it would add to the Nation! How much Scandal it would take from Religion! How much Security it would give to three Kingdoms! How much Content and Satisfaction to your Prince, and how much Joy and Gladness to the Hearts of all your Brethren; what Peace should we enjoy at Home! What Esteem and Awe should we purchase Abroad! What Love would be begotten between one another! And what Happiness and Prosperity would it bring to all! You would then see again those Happy days of Queen *Elizabeth*, our Armies to Prosper, our Citizens to Flourish, Conquest Abroad, and Peace at Home; *Charity* to increase, and Contention to cease; Love to abound, and Strife to wax less. The *Golden Age* would seem to be return'd again, and Righteousness would run down like a stream; there would then be a general rejoycing in our Streets, and we should all cry out, *This is the Lords doing; it is marvelous in our Eyes.* At last therefore endeavour to satisfy your Consciences, go about it in earnest, lay aside all Stubbornness of Heart, all Spiritual Pride, all Self-Interest. Let the Case be stated truly betwixt you: There are those that will not think much to convince you, if Scripture and Reason will do it. But you must then come with willing minds, you must not be so stiff as you have hitherto been, rather than comply one jot, you will Break, you cannot Bow; you will not yield in what you may, in those things that you cannot Condemn; you will not so much as Read the Chapters appointed for the Day, because Commanded; you will not repeat the *Creed* and the *Ten Commandments*; you will but rarely admit of the *Lords Prayer*, (because by us so often

used, a Prayer composed by Wisdom it self, and therefore it must needs be the most perfect and Divine Prayer that was ever made. And those who have thus far comply'd and set you a good Example, have been reproach'd for it, and have been look'd upon as Backsliders. But this is not the way to Unity and Peace, you must bring willing and yielding Hearts with you; you must not be Obstinate and Opiniative; you must not be Resolved before-hand; you must have Desires and Longings for Unity; you must hear without Passion and Interest, and with a desire not of Disputing and shewing your Parts, but of satisfying your Minds and Consciences, and then no doubt but your Scruples may be all resolved, and you may Conform with satisfaction.

Lay these things seriously to your Heart, pass them not slightly over, think not these words only a little vain Air, God may call you by a weak instrument, by a small Voice. Resist not the Spirit, Harden not your Hearts. This God that Calls, he would have you return, remember the Womb wherein you were Born, and the Paps that gave you Suck. Think of the Peace and Unity of *Israel*, be Dutifull as Children, Love as Brethren, Obey the King, Submit to Ordinances, be Subject to Rulers, Honour the Magistrate, Yield to Governours, be United in Mind, be of one Heart, Worship together, Separate no longer, and God will build you up: *Then God will be known in* Judah, *and his Name will be great in* Israel. You shall then be United like *Israel* and *Judah*, you shall have but one King, you shall be no more two Nations. What Nation will there be so Great, who hath God so nigh unto them: *Then you shall be his People and he will be your God; he will give you one Heart, and one Way, that you may Fear him for ever; for the good of you and your Children after you. Then will ye with one Mind and one Voice glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

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